Predictions of William Whiston

'Tis here* foretold that there should be Signs in the Women, or more particularly that menstruous Women should bring forth Monsters.

Completion.

This Prediction has already been fulfilled in the Willingham Boy, a particular account of whom is given in the Philosophical Transactions No. 475. In Dr. Handyside's a man-midwive's double monstrous Child; which the Law has lately allotted to the Parents.

In the late Hermaphrodite at Paris a Print of which has been lately published there, with the Royal

* 4 Esdras chap. 5. v. 8.

License, as the Gentleman's Magazine for January 1750 informs us; and which Hermaphrodite itself is now publickly advertised to be seen in London.

And before all these in the famous Rabbet Woman of Surrey, in the days of King George I. As to the former three, the facts are wholly undeniable; but as to the last, the poor Woman who had seventeen or eighteen portions of Rabbets taken out of her Body: the story has been so long laughed out of Countenance, that I must distinctly give my reasons for believing it to be true, and alledging it here as the fulfilling of this ancient Prophecy before us. Accordingly, besides the Testimony of the woman herself who moved great compassion at first, and was relieved by charitable persons because of her poverty, the Man-midwife Mr Howard of Godalming in Surrey, a Person of very great honesty, skill & reputation in his profession, attested it. It was then believed by by King George to be real; it was also believed by my old Friends the Speaker and Mr Samuel Collet; as they told me themselves, and was generally believed by sober

Persons in the Neighbourhood till it was unjustly laughed out of countenance at London. Nay, Mr Molyneux the Prince's Secretary a very inquisitive Person, and my very worthy friend, assured me, he had at first so great a diffidence in the truth of the fact, & was so little biassed by the other believers, even by the King himself, that he would not be satisfied, till he was permitted both to see & feel the Rabbet in that very Passage whence we all come into this world out of our Mother's Womb. Accordingly he told me, he had more evidence for it, than he had that I had a Nose; whilst he had known that by one of his senses only, that of seeing, but knew this by two of his senses both seeing & feeling.

Hear the following Extracts out of Mr St. André's Narrative, where Mr Molyneux's attestation printed is at the end. This Narrative was printed for John Clarke at the Bible under the Royal Exchange 1727.

Extracts out of that Narrative.

Page 3, 4. As Mr Howard himself intends shortly to publish the whole account and prove every circumstance of it, by such evidences, as will put this matter out of

all possibility of doubt, I must refer to him for several particulars here omitted.

and as it will be impossible to judge impartially of this fact till the evidences above mentioned are produced, it cannot be doubted but all such persons, as are not governed by prejudice, or some worse motive will suspend their judgment till these facts come to their knowledge, by a more certain way than by flying reports & conjectures.

Page 7. On Nov. 15. I attended the Honourable Mr. Molyneux Secretary to his Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who was inclined to enquire into the truth of this extraordinary case; and desired me to go with him to Guilford. — we heard the woman was actually in Labour of the 15th Rabbet.

Page 13. I delivered her of the skin of the aboresaid Rabbet, (very like the skin of an Hog's Bladder.)

Page 15. Between the times of visiting the Woman, we examined the several Rabbets which were all kept separate in distinct Pots with spirits of wine in the order they were brought away. The

first Animal did not appear to be a perfect Rabbet in all its parts; three of the feet being like the Paws of a Cat.

The Stomach & intestines like those parts in the same Animal, &c.

Page 19. From all these considerations I was fully convinced, that at the same time that the external appearance of these Animals was exactly like such creatures, as must inevitably undergo the changes that happen to Adult Animals by Food & Air; they carried with them the strongest marks of Fœtus's, even by such parts as cannot exist in an Adult, and without which a Fœtus cannot possibly be supposed to live.

This I think proves in the strongest terms possible, that these Animals were of a particular kind, and not bred in a natural Way. Nor will there be any doubt remaining (even with the least knowing in these matters) when those parts which are subservient to the Circulation of the blood & nourishment, between an Adult Creature, and its Fœtus are brought away; which I am fully satisfied must shortly happen if retained, be the cause of

this Woman's death.

Page 21. all these facts were verified before his Majesty on Saturday, Nov. 26 by the Anatomical demonstration of the first the third, fifth & ninth of these Animals which were compared with the parts of two natural Rabbets the one of the age of four months and the other of five days. Dr Steigerthal & Dr Tessier being present.

I shall with all convenient speed publish the Anatomy of these preternatural Rabbets, with their figures taken from the life and compared with the parts of Rabbets of the same growth, that the differences there mentioned may be fully understood.

In the meanwhile I shall relate what appeared in the dissection of two Rabbets, which I performed in the presence of Mr Molyneux, the very day that we returned from Guilford. The one was of four months growth, and much of the size of that which had been taken from the woman; the other was fifteen days old.

Page 22. The Lungs of the larger were as nearly as I can judge 20 times bigger in capacity than those of the Praeternatural ones; & the Lungs of the smaller were at least eight times the bigness of the before mentioned; both these were exceedingly different in colour and consistence from those of the Praternatural Rabbets.

The Foramen Ovale of the small Rabbet was more than two thirds open, and that in the larger was so far closed as but just to admit a very small probe.

as to the Stomach & Intestines the difference was so notoriously great from those we had examined that wen in the sucking Rabbet the Stomach & Caecum were at least three times larger than those parts in the Praternatural ones.

Page 23. The account she gave of herself was, that on the twenty third of April last, as she was weeding in a field, she saw a Rabbet spring up near her; after which she ran with another Woman that was at work just by her. This set her a longing for Rabbets, being then as she thought five weeks gone with Child.

Page 24. The other woman perceiving she

was uneasy, charged her with longing for the Rabbet they could not catch; but she denied it. Soon after, another Rabbet sprung up near the same place which she endeavoured likewise to catch. The same Night she dreamed that she was in a Field with those two Rabbets in her Lap, and awaked with a sick Fit; which lasted till Morning.

From that time for above three months she had a constant & strong desire to eat Rabbets; but being very poor & indigent could not procure any.

Page 26. The account Mr Howard gave was in every material circumstance, the same with the Woman's Relation.

Page 27. Mr Howard farther related, that when she was delivered of one Rabbet another was immediately felt in her Belly struggling with such violence that the motion thereof could be sensibly felt and seen; that this motion had sometimes been so strong as to move the Bed Cloaths, that it has lasted for twenty, and above thirty hours together. This particular Fact was unanimously agreed, and attested by most of the People at Guilford, who have had the curiosity to go and see her; and was confirmed to Mr Molyneux, and

myself, by above ten different Persons, who all seemed to be indifferent in this matter.

Page 31. Mr Ahlers (the King's Surgeon for his German Household) having been at Guilford by his Majesty's order (as Mr Howard told us) to enquire into the truth of this Fact, was fully convinced of it, as he himself declared.

Page 33. John Howard of Guilford in the County of Surrey maketh oath that on Sunday the 20th day of this Instant, Month of November; Mr Ahlers (Surgeon to his Majesty's German Household) brought away the Loins and inferior parts of a Rabbet, of about three Months growth.

Page 34. That after this, Mr Ahlers told this Deponent, and all the Persons present, that he was fully satisfied & convinced of the truth, & that he could have no doubts after such proof.
That at the same time he gave the Woman a Guinea; expressing great sa-

tisfaction and promising that he would procure her a Pension from his Majesty. Nov. 25. 1726.

Page 36. Mary Toft & her Nurse make Oath that Mr Ahlers declared, it was wonderful People would not believe a fact so true, as this appeared to him; and Mary Toft saith that Mr Ahlers examined her Breasts and found Milk in one of them the same day.

Page 37. Elizabeth Holmes of Guilford in the County of Surry, Widow, maketh oath that she asked Mr Ahlers whether he believed this account, and that his answer was, that he fully did believe it. To which she replied, then I hope Sir you will convince a great many unbelievers when you return to London as some Gentlemen have already done to which he said he should; as she apprehended.

Page 38. The like was sworn by Clive Sands the same day.

Page 39. Thomas Howard of Guilford in the County of Surry Surgeon, maketh oath. — Mr Ahlers shewed

him the Loins and inferior parts of a Rabbet which he told me he extracted himself out of the Uterus.

Page 40. That he told him; he was fully convinced and satisfied that it came out of the Uterus. That he asked him if it was possible it could be forced or thrust into the Uterus, he said No. Nov. 27.

Mr Ahlers Preface to his Observations — I do not deny but that at Guilford I behaved myself all along like one who was perfectly satisfied in that matter.

Mr Molyneux's Attestation.

I have carefully (says he) read the above Narrative; whether the Animals mentioned therein were preternaturally produced in this Woman (Mary Toft) or that a Fraud is practicable in this case I do not take upon me to say; Gentlemen who are sufficient Judges will determine that matter upon proper Evidence.

I can only certify that I did draw up a relation as is above mentioned, which in the most material circumstances of the fact, agrees with the Narration, and I can further affirm, that I did not perceive the least circumstance of fraud in the conduct of this affair, while I was at Guilford, Nov. 29. 1726

N. B. Neither did Mr Ahlers, the King's Surgeon, nor Sir Richard Manningham, of whose Mr Howard's and Mr St Andre's Evidence, till the thing was impudently laughed out of countenance, not in Surry where the scene lay, but at London, thirty miles off, and till those that acted in this matter or believed their accounts were unjustly made sport of by the Scepticks of the Town. Nor did the woman ever confess a fraud, till she was herself threatened with a painful Operation and with Imprisonment, which Fraud was impossible because upon dissection, it was most evident, that many at least of those Creatures that were taken from

her were not true or Natural Rabbets but of Preternatural Production, which it was impossible for her to procure, had she been never so much disposed for it. Nor did the Surgeons or Man-Midwives, pretend to any ground of suspicion till they found they were like to suffer greatly in their own reputation and Practice, if they had supported that story any longer which they were not willing to do as any one may see in all their retractions; of which sort-of confessions like those made upon torture I have no opinion at all. Nor does the ridiculous and abusive pictures set before Sir Richard Manningham's Diary in the Copy that I use: nor a distinct Pamphlet called "The Anatomist Dissected" being, as is said by Lemuel Gulliver a pretended Surgeon & anatomist to the King of Lilliput and Blefuscu, and Fellow of the Academy of Sciences in Balni-barbi (otherwise Dean Swift) nor the other Pamphlet called Sootesbin Dissected, both written in the way

of the grossest banter and ridicule which are contained in my copy also, move me to alter my opinion at all as to the truth of those Monstrous Productions, which I fear not to affirm, I surely believe to have been undeniably real & no other indeed than one direct completion of the eminent signal before us, that towards the end of the World "Menstruous Women should bring forth Monsters" and I well remember that I then shewed Mr Molyneux this Prophecy of Esdras, which foretold such events about these times. Nay, upon his farther enquiry and concern about the terrible Judgements that the same Esdras denounced in the same prophecy, I comforted him with the joyfull prediction in the same Author that good Men would be providentially preserved from them.

4 Esdras 9. v. 7. 8.

The way of bantering matters of Fact that are disagreable to Sceptick & Unbelievers as whatsoever looks supernatural or Miraculous always

are, seem after the Lord Shaftesbury & Mr Collins to have almost begun here amongst us with the banter of this wonderful & supernatural in Mary Toft; though it be now become a standing argument since the writings of Dr Middleton against all such facts as imply a Providence, and the interposition of good Angels or wicked Demons in the affairs of this World; which yet has been the constant opinion, or rather experience and Attestation of all Mankind, excepting the Sadducees and Epicureans in all the past ages of the World till the present age. and truly if these merry Infidels could as well banter off Eclipses & Comets, and northern light and Balls of Fire, and Earthquakes & their effects with the like facility as they now pretend to do Ancient Histories both sacred & prophane they would soon get clear of all arguments for Divine Providence, and Divine Revelation, and would openly and universally throw of all the obligations of Religion. As for myself,

I have very long, and very successfully accustomed myself to be guided wholly by another rule; by the real evidence of Fact & Testimonies belonging to the several Ages whereto such Fact do belong, and not otherwise, as do all wise and upright Judges in their Court of Justice without any regard to the vain amusement of our present merry and profane Scribblers. See Supt. to the Literal Accomplishment of Prophecies p. 5. 6.

Accordingly when I heard this Rabbet Woman and her supposed Accomplices were to be indicted of a Cheat and were to be openly tried for the same, I waited for the Issue of such a Trial, in order to my more compleat satisfaction: but finding no such thing was done, I easily concluded no such thing could be done. So I have all along gone by my original evidence, and have ever since believed the Fact to have been true, and an eminent completion of the Prophecy before us.

This is very like the handwriting of George Stevens. It is extracted from Whistons Memoirs of himself.